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SUBJECT: GRENADA CELEBRATES 34TH ANNIVERSARY OF INDEPENDENCE

REF: A. (A) GRENADA 17

[1](#)B. (B) GRENADA 18

[1](#)1. SUMMARY: The Ambassador visited Grenada February 6 - 7 to participate in the country's Independence Day activities, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' (MFA) February 6 reception and the February 7 Military Parade. Members of the Puerto Rican National Guard Color Guard marched in the parade. U.S. Coast Guard cutter USCGC FORWARD was in St. George's February 5 - 8 to show the flag (reported ref A) and several officers accompanied the Ambassador to the Independence Day events. While in Grenada, the Ambassador officially handed over to the Government of Grenada the two emergency operating centers funded by U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM). She had attended the groundbreaking ceremonies during her July 2007 visit. Ambassador Ourisman's February 7 meeting with newly arrived Venezuelan Ambassador to Grenada was reported in ref B. Venezuelan Coast Guard and paratroopers made up nearly half of those marching this year, a repeat of last year. END SUMMARY

[1](#)2. The Ambassador was accompanied to the events by OMS Nora Myers, Charge d'Affaires Karen Jo McIsaac, and DAO-Caracas Commander Stephen Leslie. Commander Matt Sibley, Commanding Officer of the USCGC FORWARD and three of his officers attended the reception and the parade.

EMERGENCY OPERATING CENTERS HANDED OVER

[1](#)3. During the brief official handing over ceremony staged at the emergency operating center (EOC) located at Pearls Airport, the Ambassador commended Grenada for recognizing the need to improve its emergency preparedness capacity. She noted the important role the two new EOC's will play by enabling the Royal Grenada Police Force (RGPF), the National Disaster Management Agency (NADMA), and other first responders to reach Grenadians outside St. George's more quickly and efficiently than before. The two EOC's - one on Grenada and one on Carriacou - represent the ongoing cooperation and friendship between the peoples of the United States and of Grenada. She reminded the audience that the United States provided US\$46 million in assistance to Grenada to help rebuild the country following Hurricane Ivan's devastating passage in 2004. U.S. assistance continues, as demonstrated by the two EOC's. The Ambassador regretted that she would not be able to visit Carriacou on this visit, but noted that she had attended the EOC groundbreaking ceremony there during her July 2007 visit to the country. She expressed the hope that she would have time to visit Carriacou again at a later date.

[1](#)4. Member of Parliament representing St. Andrews Northeast, Roland Bhola welcomed Ambassador Ourisman to his constituency. Minister for Foreign Affairs and Carriacou and Petit Martinique Affairs, Elvin Nimrod, received the EOC's on behalf of the government. Nimrod thanked the Ambassador for the ongoing support the GOG has received from the United States and promised the EOC's will be put to good use. The Ambassador presented Nimrod with a plaque commemorating the event.

15. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition Tillman Thomas and several members from both houses of Parliament and NADMA also attended the event.

INDEPENDENCE DAY EVENTS

16. The Ambassador attended the February 6 Independence Day reception hosted by MFA Elvin Nimrod at the Grenadian by Rex Resorts. Many of the non-resident Ambassadors and High Commissioners were in attendance, having arrived earlier in the day from Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Caracas, and Jamaica.

17. On February 7, the Ambassador attended the Military Parade which was held for the first time in Grenada's National Cricket Stadium (built by the PRC with Chinese labor and completed in January 2007). The stadium proved to be an excellent venue for the event. GOG officials estimated that around 12,000 Grenadians showed up, and all were able to find seats in the facility, built to hold 16,000. There was a brief shower, but the good weather held for the duration.

18. Four members of the Puerto Rico National Guard Color Guard gave a stellar performance in the parade. The RGPF Police Band, Special Services Unit, Coast Guard, Women's Police Unit, Men's Police Unit, Prison Guards, as well as the Girl Guides, Boy Scouts, Red Cross Auxiliary, Lions Club all marched followed by five police cars, one fire truck, and an ambulance with sirens blaring, and a civilian motorcycle (about ten two- and three-wheelers) brigade. The Women's and Men's Police Units performed a complex march to create 34, the number of years of independence to enthusiastic cheers and applause from the crowd.

19. Approximately 125 Venezuelan soldiers and sailors marched as well, making up probably half of those on the field. About 20 were from the Venezuelan Coast Guard (which one announcer misidentified several times as from the USCGC FORWARD) who had

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some difficulty remaining in step. The remaining Venezuelans were paratroopers, in camouflage fatigues, with green and black face paint (face half green and have black), carrying automatic weapons. The latter swung their guns up and chanted "parachutists, parachutists" as they passed the reviewing stand. The parachutists in question were, however, grounded. We learned afterwards from the Venezuelan diplomats that the GOG, after requesting their participation, had not managed to give them the required diplomatic clearance to bring the planes and helicopters into Grenada to perform the parachute drops.

19. The Ambassador met with the Puerto Rican National Guard Color Guard members at her hotel after the parade to thank them personally for their spirited participation.
MCISAAC